

When You Lose What You Value

Written by Bill Perkins

All of David's mighty men were veterans in the war with disappointment and pain. The biblical text tells us they were in "distress," "debt," or "discontented" when they joined David (2 Samuel 22:2).

Through Thin Ice

Their lives had fallen through thin ice and dropped into a cold darkness. They had lost their money, their homes, and their reputations. Like undersized children, they had been pushed around by a school-yard bully named Saul who tirelessly sought to dishonor and destroy them as they fled his wrath with David.

An Insight Eluded Me

The more I reflected on these men, the more their story captured my imagination. My own loss of a vision in which I had invested eleven years ate away at me like a tapeworm, consuming my strength and with it my hope. Yet I sensed there was something about these men that would help, if only I could see it. Over and over again I told myself: These men who suffered so much were David's mighty men! An insight--something important--kept eluding my grasp.

Everything Fell Into Place

And then I realized something that caused everything to fall into place--like a math problem that suddenly makes sense. Namely: The identity of a warrior isn't destroyed by adversity, it's strengthened.

As I reflect on that insight now it somehow seems trite. But in that moment, because of my sorrow, it was a lifeline thrown to a drowning man. I realized that this elemental truth had evaded me because I was too proud, or simply too unwilling, to embrace it. In that moment, failure had stripped away my pride and God had brought me to a place where I could grab hold of it.

I realized that the God-given masculinity of these mighty men didn't wither under the hot sun of hardship. It emerged. They found God's stability at their time of greatest need, like a tree with deep roots during a gale. In him they discovered a source of strength that let them stand tall.

That means all the hardship we've suffered can be used by God to make us stronger, not weaker. It means if you've suffered or are suffering, God wants to use adversity to mold you into a mighty man of faith.

Perhaps you accept the validity of such an idea but aren't sure how it works. It seems that when a loss exposes our weakness and we run to God, we discover his strength. You see, God's power is unleashed at our point of your greatest weakness. That's why Paul declared, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Consider the Fact

The benefits of this reality are profound. If during times of weakness you turn to God, you'll emerge a stronger man because you'll rely on his strength, not your own. Your identity will be dependent on him, not on your circumstances. In doing so you'll stand shoulder to shoulder with other men whom God empowered to fight against spiritual darkness. Consider the fact that:

Elijah was hunted by an evil king and queen ... but sparked a revival.

Daniel was thrown into a lions' den ... and God delivered him.

Paul was persecuted ... but wrote much of the New Testament.

The list of biblical warriors who became strong through adversity goes on and on and on. God used suffering to expose their weakness and drive them to him so that in his power they could attack enemy strongholds. Ultimately, God wants to use our weakness to help us find our identity in his strength.

The Choice Is Ours

The choice is ours. When we're broken and our weakness is exposed we can see ourselves as weak and unable to fight. Or we can acknowledge our weakness. Instead of letting it define our identity, we can allow God's strength-manifested in our weakness--to define us.